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Report 2015: Lobbying in Europe: hidden influence, privileged access

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This report examines the practice of lobbying and the attempts to regulate it in 19 European countries and within the three core EU institutions. It comes at a time when public trust in government is at an all-time low and the practice of lobbying is widely associated with secrecy and unfair advantage. It also comes at a moment when an increasing number of governments in Europe are promising to tackle the problem of undue influence in politics, and the need for good government is particularly pressing given the range of economic, social and political challenges currently faced by European countries and EU institutions.

Lobbying is an integral part of a healthy democracy, closely related to universal values such as freedom of speech and the right to petition of government. It allows for various interest groups to present their views on public decisions that may come to affect them. It also has the potential to enhance the quality of decision-making by providing channels for the input of expertise on increasingly technical issues to legislators and decision makers.

Despite this, multiple scandals throughout Europe demonstrate that without clear and enforceable rules, a select number of voices with better resourcing and contacts can come to dominate political decision-making.

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